



Transylvania County Tourism Development Authority Minutes of 6/24/21 Virtual Board Meeting

Present: Grant Bullard, Layton Parker, Libby Freeman, David Guice, Dee Dee Perkins, Ali Lien, Jessica Whitmire

Absent: Tracie Trusler

Staff Present: Clark Lovelace, MJ Gordon, Corey Gafnea

Guests Present: Karen Tessier, Jonathan Griffin, Kate Hayes, Dana Antonuccio

Call to Order – Layton Parker

Layton Parker called the meeting to order at 8:31 AM.

Public Hearing – Layton Parker

LP called a public hearing to discuss the proposed FY 2022 TCTDA Budget. He reviewed the presented and reviewed the budget, noting that there is one recommended change to what was presented last month and has been available for public viewing. The change is the creation of a line item for Destination Infrastructure Grants with a budget of \$30,000, with those funds being reduced from "Strategic Plan". This enables the Destination Infrastructure Committee to approve small grants directly without having to submit them for board approval. The bottom line of the expenditures did not change.

LP asked for any public comments. There were none. Public hearing was closed at 8:37.

Presentation of Minutes – Layton Parker

LP presented the minutes of the May 27, 2021 board meeting for review. David Guice made a motion to approve as presented. Dee Dee Perkins seconded. Motion passed.

Director's Report – Clark Lovelace

Financials – Clark Lovelace shared that occupancy tax revenues continue to occur at record pace and expenditures continue to be close to budgeted amounts. He mentioned that there are some projects that committees want to support prior to year-end that will be discussed later in this meeting. There are two months of revenue and one month of expenses remaining in FY21. DG made a motion to approve the May financials as presented. DDP seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

CL mentioned that subsequent to our last meeting he learned that it would be acceptable for the \$10,000 in funding for debris removal to come from the Transylvania Always expenditure account item instead of the Strategic Plan account. He recommended that we do so to more accurately reflect the rationale for the funding and to better capture the funding source in the future. DG made a motion to move the \$10,000 for debris removal from the Strategic Plan account to the Transylvania Always account as recommended. Mac Morrow seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

Office Report and Tourism Update – CL stated that staff is working to update our FY22 grant standards and creating a new grant application with three paths, Tourism Marketing, Destination Infrastructure, and Transylvania Always. The new grant application will have a few additional requirements including submitting a W-9 and record-keeping protocols for approval by the grant based on some recommendations from Jonathan Griffin. Each committee will review their path, prior to board approval. More to come.

Chair Report – Layton Parker

Chamber/TCT Contract Update – LP shared that the Chamber and TCT had reached a contract for service agreement for FY22. The basic structure is the same as it has been, with a handful of changes to the agreement based on advice from attorneys.

LP explained that research and conversations continue on the best path forward. He believes that in the end it will be best to have a director and staff working directly for the TCT board and to continue to contract with the Chamber for visitor center services and rent of office space. At this point we are not ready to make a motion or share an official proposal. More research and work needs to occur.

Ecusta Trail – LP shared that the City of Brevard has taken recent action to take the lead on the funding and development of the trail in Transylvania County, specifically including the trail in a RAISE federal grant. The TCT board then discussed the Friends of the Ecusta Trail request for 1% of TCT funds for a five-year period. In the end it was determined that the board is unable to provide a quick answer to that request. The board expressed continued support for the trail and intent on funding support moving forward, but felt it best to speak with the Transylvania County Manager and Commissioners to ascertain their thoughts on the development of the trail, maintenance once completed, and more, as well as a conversation with the City of Brevard to learn more about their recent actions.

FY22 Budget Proposal – LP briefly reviewed the proposed budget which was covered earlier with an opportunity for public comment. DDP made a motion to approve the budget as presented with the one change. GB seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

Miscellaneous – LP informed the Board that Tracie Trusler had resigned from her position on the TCT board and thanked her for her service. He asked for suggestions for an accommodation owner/operator to serve in her place. Ali Lein offered to step in as an accommodation owner/operator if it would be easier to find a member-at-large. GB suggested that someone from the Toxaway area might be a good fit and help with representation from the southern part of the county. CL reminded that whatever is decided, an official recommendation will need to be made to the County Commissioners.

Transylvania Always Committee Update – Aaron Baker

Transylvania Always Chair Aaron Baker presented a committee update. He reported that both the Be Waterfall Wise and the LIB Cleanup Crew campaigns were accomplished in the last six months and both received positive reviews. The Joel Branch Connector work has been completed. There is a scheduled ribbon cutting for 11am on July 9. The Pisgah Conservancy is doing a press release with input from TCT. TCT contributed an additional \$3K from the TAC to cover 1/3 of the funding for additional work required to finish the project. In the spring of 2021, the Transylvania Always Committee reached out to our public land managers this spring for shovel ready projects in support of the TAC mission. Three funding requests have been made.

- Triple Falls Consultation Funding request - \$2,500.
- Black Mountain Trailhead Project - \$30,000
- Butter Gap Area Trail Improvements - \$30,000

The committee recommendation is to have Triple Falls and Black Mtn approved as FY21 expenditures and use \$30,000 from the FY22 budget for Butter Gap. TAC is almost out of dedicated funds for FY21, having spent almost all of the \$75,000 that was allocated. It is worth noting that this dollar amount was lower than it would have been since the budget was set in the height of the pandemic impact on local tourism. This plan also ensures that the TAC will have plenty of available funds for FY22. As we've discussed, TAC expenditures are in a unique sweet spot in that they have a positive impact on visitors, take care of our destination, and show locals some of the good that tourism provides. To recap, the official committee recommendation is as follows: The Transylvania Always Committee feels that the Triple Falls request for \$2,500 and the Black Mountain request for \$30,000 are important tourism-related expenditures that align with the goals of our Transylvania Always initiative and move to approve both requests in full with any remaining funds from the budgeted FY21 Transylvania Always category, plus up to \$32,500 of additional funds. GB seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Marketing Update – Market Connections

Karen Tessier asked if there were any questions about the marketing report that was sent in the advance packet. She highlighted that the website metrics are trending positively, the billboards are in place, the retargeted digital display ads program for our partners has been revamped. She presented photos from two recent photoshoots which focused on diversity in the outdoors and downtown. The recent Pink Bike sweepstakes had 3,460 entries, generated 749 email addresses and had over 10K impressions. In addition the Transylvania Always initiative has shown TCT to be a leader in the state of North Carolina with the work we are doing in regards to sustainability. The head of the North Carolina State Parks is using our Be Waterfall Wise safety campaign. KT mentioned that the Outdoor Economy Conference will be held October 12-15 in Cherokee NC.

Old Business

LP reminded the board that the Veterans History Museum of the Carolinas is on the agenda for next month and to please visit it prior to the July meeting if you haven't been recently. It was decided that for the next few months we will keep our meetings virtual, noting that while the chamber meeting space is comfortable, it does not allow for six feet of social distance.

New Business

TCT received a grant application from Scott Kuba/Lions Club for \$3K for Downtown LED Street Light Project Request. This grant was presented to the Destination Infrastructure Committee and DDP as committee chair, recommends that the grant be funded with \$3K coming from the FY21 budget. MM seconded the motion. Motion passed.

KT let everyone know that Nathan Jordan has left Market Connections to start his own photography and video production business.

Public Comment

None

Meeting Adjourn

LP made a motion made to adjourn meeting at 10:35. Seconded by DG. Motion passed.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Corey Gafnea